

## A Study on Peer Collaboration and Its Effects in Teaching Speaking to First-Year Students at a University in Hanoi

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**ABSTRACT:** This study investigates the impact of peer collaboration on the speaking proficiency of first-year university students at a university in Hanoi through a quasi-experimental design. A total of 124 students were divided into experimental and control groups, with the experimental group participating in peer collaboration activities such as role-playing, group discussions, and collaborative projects over an 11-week period. Quantitative results showed a significant improvement in the experimental group's speaking scores, with a mean difference of -1.456 ( $t = -11.313$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Qualitative findings from classroom observations, surveys, interviews, and focus groups revealed increased confidence, reduced speaking anxiety, and the effectiveness of specific activities in enhancing speaking skills. Students reported that these activities provided practical language use, constructive peer feedback, and a supportive learning environment. The study concludes that peer collaboration is a highly effective strategy for improving speaking proficiency, fostering cultural understanding, and promoting social interaction among first-year students. These findings suggest that integrating structured peer collaboration activities into language curricula can lead to better learning outcomes. Future research should explore the long-term effects of peer collaboration and its impact on other language skills.

**KEYWORDS:** Peer Collaboration, Speaking Proficiency, Language Instruction, Role-Playing, Group Discussions, Collaborative Projects

### I. INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background and Rationale

Speaking skills are a crucial component of language acquisition and play a significant role in the overall proficiency and communicative competence of language learners. Speaking is fundamental to human communication and is essential for expressing ideas, thoughts, and emotions effectively (Richards, 2008). It enables learners to interact with native speakers and other learners, thereby practicing and enhancing their language abilities.

Regular practice of speaking helps learners develop fluency, which is the ability to speak smoothly and effortlessly (Thornbury, 2005). Fluency is a critical aspect of language proficiency as it allows for more natural and spontaneous interactions. Moreover, speaking involves active participation and immediate feedback, which are crucial for effective learning (Brown & Lee, 2015). Through speaking activities, learners can actively engage with the language, make mistakes, and receive corrective feedback, facilitating faster and more effective language acquisition.

Speaking is interconnected with other language skills such as listening, reading, and writing (Harmer, 2007). For instance, speaking activities often require learners to listen and respond, thereby improving their listening comprehension. Additionally, discussing reading materials or writing about speaking topics can integrate these skills, leading to a more comprehensive language learning experience.

Developing speaking skills can significantly boost learners' confidence in using the language (Ur, 2012). Confidence is crucial for learners to take risks, practice more, and eventually achieve higher levels of language proficiency. Speaking also provides insights into the cultural aspects of the language being learned (Byram, 1997). Through conversations, learners can understand cultural nuances, idiomatic expressions, and social norms, which are integral to achieving communicative competence.

Furthermore, speaking skills have immediate practical applications in real-world situations such as travel, work, and social interactions (Goh & Burns, 2012). This practical relevance motivates learners to invest more effort in developing their speaking abilities. In summary, speaking skills are indispensable for effective communication, active learning, and the integration of other language skills. They also build learner confidence, foster cultural understanding, and have immediate practical applications, making them a cornerstone of successful language acquisition.

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Peer collaboration is an educational approach that involves students working together to achieve common academic goals. In the context of language learning, particularly in enhancing speaking skills, peer collaboration has shown to be highly effective. This approach leverages the social aspect of learning, where students can benefit from each other's knowledge, skills, and perspectives.

### *Benefits of peer collaboration*

One of the primary advantages of peer collaboration is the creation of a supportive learning environment. According to Vygotsky's Social Constructivism Theory, social interaction plays a fundamental role in the development of cognition (Vygotsky, 1978). When first-year students engage in peer collaboration, they can practice speaking in a less intimidating setting compared to traditional teacher-led classrooms. This supportive environment reduces anxiety and encourages more frequent use of the target language (Topping, 2005).

Peer collaboration also promotes active learning and immediate feedback. Students can engage in meaningful conversations, correct each other's mistakes, and provide constructive feedback. This interactive process not only enhances speaking skills but also helps in reinforcing grammatical structures and vocabulary (Johnson, Johnson, & Smith, 2013). Additionally, peer collaboration activities such as role-plays, group discussions, and peer feedback sessions offer diverse opportunities for students to practice speaking in various contexts, thereby improving their overall communicative competence (Barkley, Cross, & Major, 2014).

### *Types of peer collaboration activities*

Various peer collaboration activities can be integrated into language learning to enhance speaking skills. Peer tutoring, where more proficient students assist their peers, has been found effective in improving language proficiency (Storch, 2013). Group work and collaborative projects encourage students to communicate and negotiate meaning, which are essential components of language acquisition (Gillies, 2016). Peer feedback sessions, where students review and provide feedback on each other's spoken output, help in identifying areas for improvement and building confidence (McCafferty, Jacobs, & Iddings, 2006).

### *Challenges and considerations*

Despite its benefits, peer collaboration in speaking enhancement also presents challenges. For instance, there might be unequal participation among group members, where more confident students dominate the conversation (Barkley et al., 2014). Instructors need to carefully design activities and monitor group dynamics to ensure balanced participation. Additionally, providing training on how to give effective feedback can maximize the benefits of peer collaboration (Topping, 2005).

In conclusion, peer collaboration is a powerful strategy for enhancing speaking skills among first-year students. It creates a supportive learning environment, promotes active engagement, and provides opportunities for meaningful practice. By carefully designing and implementing peer collaboration activities, educators can significantly improve the speaking proficiency of their students.

## **1.2 Research problem**

Effective teaching strategies are essential to improving speaking skills, particularly for first-year students who often face numerous challenges in acquiring these skills. Speaking is a critical component of language proficiency and plays a significant role in students' academic and professional success. Therefore, developing effective teaching strategies is imperative for several reasons.

### *Addressing communication barriers*

First-year students often encounter communication barriers such as anxiety, lack of confidence, and limited exposure to the target language. These barriers can hinder their ability to participate actively in speaking activities (Ur, 2012). Effective teaching strategies can create a supportive and low-stress environment that encourages students to practice speaking without fear of making mistakes. Techniques such as role-playing, group discussions, and interactive activities can help reduce anxiety and build confidence (Harmer, 2007).

### *Enhancing fluency and accuracy*

Fluency and accuracy are essential components of speaking proficiency. Fluency involves the ability to speak smoothly and naturally, while accuracy focuses on the correct use of language structures. Effective teaching strategies should balance these two aspects to ensure comprehensive language development (Thornbury, 2005). Task-based language teaching (TBLT) and communicative language teaching (CLT) are examples of strategies that promote both fluency and accuracy by engaging students in meaningful and communicative tasks (Richards, 2008).

### *Providing authentic language practice*

Authentic language practice is crucial for developing speaking skills. Traditional language instruction often lacks opportunities for real-life communication, leading to limited practical speaking abilities (Brown & Lee, 2015). Effective teaching strategies should incorporate authentic tasks that mirror real-world situations, such as debates, presentations, and collaborative projects. This approach helps students apply their language skills in practical contexts, enhancing their overall communicative competence (Goh & Burns, 2012).

### *Promoting active engagement and interaction*

Active engagement and interaction are key to language learning. Effective teaching strategies should foster a collaborative learning environment where students can interact with their peers and instructors. Peer collaboration, for instance, allows students to learn from each other, receive immediate feedback, and practice speaking in a supportive setting (Storch, 2013). Interactive techniques

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such as pair work, group activities, and peer feedback sessions can significantly enhance speaking skills (Barkley, Cross, & Major, 2014).

### *Facilitating continuous improvement*

Continuous improvement is essential for mastering speaking skills. Effective teaching strategies should include regular assessment and feedback mechanisms to monitor students' progress and identify areas for improvement (Byrne, 1986). Formative assessments, such as oral presentations and speaking tests, combined with constructive feedback, enable students to reflect on their performance and make necessary adjustments (Brown, 2004).

In conclusion, the need for effective teaching strategies to improve speaking skills is evident in addressing communication barriers, enhancing fluency and accuracy, providing authentic language practice, promoting active engagement, and facilitating continuous improvement. By implementing these strategies, educators can significantly improve the speaking proficiency of their students.

### **1.3 Research objectives**

This first purpose of the research aims to evaluate how peer collaboration affects the development of speaking abilities. It seeks to understand whether collaborative learning methods contribute to improvements in fluency, accuracy, and overall communicative competence in speaking. By examining the effectiveness of peer collaboration, the research will determine if this approach can serve as a viable alternative or complement to traditional language instruction methods.

The second purpose of the research is on pinpointing the particular peer collaboration activities and strategies that yield the most significant enhancements in speaking proficiency. The research will explore various collaborative techniques, such as peer tutoring, group discussions, role-plays, and peer feedback sessions. By identifying the most effective techniques, the study aims to provide practical recommendations for educators on how to implement peer collaboration in their language teaching practices effectively.

### **1.4 Research questions**

The study attempts to answer the following research questions

*1.1.1. To what extent does peer collaboration improve the speaking proficiency of first-year students as measured by standardized speaking tests??*

*1.1.2. What specific peer collaboration activities are most effective in improving speaking skills?*

This first research question aims to explore the overall effect of peer collaboration on the speaking skills of first-year students. It seeks to determine whether peer collaboration leads to measurable improvements in areas such as fluency, accuracy, pronunciation, and overall communicative competence. By examining the impact, the study will assess if peer collaboration can enhance speaking abilities more effectively compared to traditional instructional methods.

The second research question focuses on identifying which peer collaboration techniques provide the most significant benefits for speaking skill development. It aims to analyze various activities such as peer tutoring, group discussions, role-plays, and peer feedback sessions to determine their effectiveness. The goal is to pinpoint the activities that most effectively improve students' speaking proficiency, thereby providing actionable insights for educators to optimize their teaching strategies.

### **1.2. Significance of the study**

The significance of this study lies in its potential to contribute to the field of language education by providing valuable insights into the effectiveness of peer collaboration in enhancing speaking skills among first-year students. The findings from this research can have several important implications.

First, the study can enhance educational practice by guiding educators in adopting and integrating effective peer collaboration techniques into their teaching methods. A better understanding of which specific activities are most beneficial will allow teachers to tailor their instruction to meet the needs of their students, leading to more dynamic and interactive language classrooms.

Improved speaking proficiency is another crucial outcome. By identifying effective peer collaboration strategies, the study can help improve the speaking abilities of first-year students. Enhanced speaking skills are vital for academic success, social integration, and future professional opportunities. Additionally, the study may reveal that peer collaboration not only enhances speaking skills but also boosts students' confidence and motivation to participate in speaking activities, resulting in a more positive and engaging learning experience.

The insights gained from this research can also inform curriculum developers on how to structure language programs to include effective peer collaboration activities. This can ensure that speaking skills development is given adequate emphasis and that students receive a well-rounded language education. Furthermore, the study's findings can provide evidence to support the implementation of collaborative learning policies in educational institutions. Policymakers can use this evidence to advocate for resources, training, and support systems that facilitate peer collaboration in language learning.

Finally, the research can serve as a foundation for future studies exploring various aspects of peer collaboration and language learning. It can open up new avenues for research on different student populations, other language skills, and the long-term impacts of collaborative learning.

In summary, this study is significant because it addresses a crucial aspect of language education, offers practical recommendations for educators and curriculum developers, supports evidence-based policy making, and lays the groundwork for future research in the field.

### II. LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 1.3. Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework for this research on the effectiveness of peer collaboration in enhancing speaking skills among first-year students is grounded in Vygotsky's Social Constructivism Theory. This theory posits that social interaction is fundamental to the development of cognition and that learning is inherently a social process (Vygotsky, 1978). According to Vygotsky, learners construct knowledge through interactions with others, particularly through collaborative activities where they can share ideas, challenge each other's thinking, and build upon their collective understanding.

##### *Social Constructivism and Language Learning*

Vygotsky's concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) is particularly relevant to this study. The ZPD refers to the difference between what a learner can do independently and what they can achieve with guidance and collaboration (Vygotsky, 1978). Peer collaboration provides an ideal context for learners to operate within their ZPD, as peers can offer support, feedback, and scaffolding that enable learners to perform tasks beyond their current abilities.

##### *Peer Collaboration in Language Learning*

Research has shown that peer collaboration can significantly enhance language learning, particularly speaking skills. Collaborative learning activities, such as peer tutoring, group discussions, and role-plays, allow students to practice speaking in a supportive environment, reducing anxiety and increasing confidence (Barkley, Cross, & Major, 2014). Additionally, these activities provide opportunities for meaningful interaction and immediate feedback, which are crucial for language development (Johnson, Johnson, & Smith, 2013).

##### *Interaction Hypothesis*

The Interaction Hypothesis, proposed by Michael Long, further supports the importance of interaction in language learning. Long (1996) argues that language acquisition is facilitated through interaction that promotes negotiation of meaning. During peer collaboration, students engage in conversations that require them to clarify, elaborate, and modify their language use, thereby enhancing their speaking skills. This interactive process helps learners internalize linguistic structures and vocabulary, leading to improved language proficiency (Long, 1996).

##### *Sociocultural Theory*

The Sociocultural Theory, also rooted in Vygotsky's work, emphasizes the role of social interaction and cultural tools in learning. This theory suggests that language learning is mediated by cultural artifacts, such as language itself, and occurs through social interaction (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). Peer collaboration leverages these social and cultural dynamics, enabling learners to co-construct knowledge and develop their speaking abilities through dialogue and shared experiences.

##### *Empirical Evidence*

Empirical studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of peer collaboration in language learning. For instance, Storch (2013) found that collaborative writing tasks improved both fluency and accuracy in students' spoken language. Similarly, research by Gillies (2016) showed that cooperative learning strategies enhanced students' oral communication skills and overall language competence. In conclusion, the theoretical framework for this research is grounded in Vygotsky's Social Constructivism Theory, the Interaction Hypothesis, and Sociocultural Theory. These theories collectively emphasize the importance of social interaction, collaboration, and cultural tools in language learning. By exploring the effectiveness of peer collaboration, this study aims to contribute to the understanding of how collaborative activities can enhance speaking skills among first-year students.

#### 1.4. Vygotsky's social constructivism theory and its relevance to peer collaboration.

Vygotsky's Social Constructivism Theory posits that social interaction is fundamental to cognitive development. According to Vygotsky, learning is inherently a social process that occurs through interaction with others, particularly through collaborative activities where individuals can share ideas, challenge each other's thinking, and build upon their collective understanding (Vygotsky, 1978). One of the central concepts of Vygotsky's theory is the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which refers to the range of tasks that a learner can perform with the guidance and support of a more knowledgeable other but cannot yet perform independently.

##### *Relevance to Peer Collaboration*

Vygotsky's theory is highly relevant to peer collaboration in educational settings, particularly in language learning. Peer collaboration provides an ideal context for learners to operate within their ZPD. During collaborative activities, peers can offer scaffolding, which involves providing support and guidance that enables learners to perform tasks beyond their current abilities. As peers interact and work together, they help each other bridge the gap between what they can do independently and what they can achieve collaboratively (Vygotsky, 1978).

Social interaction is crucial for cognitive development, as emphasized by Vygotsky. Peer collaboration facilitates meaningful social interactions, allowing learners to engage in dialogue, share perspectives, and co-construct knowledge. This social aspect of learning is particularly important in language acquisition, where communication and interaction are key to developing speaking skills (Vygotsky, 1978).

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According to Vygotsky, learning is mediated by cultural tools and artifacts, including language. Peer collaboration leverages these tools as learners use language to communicate, negotiate meaning, and solve problems together. This mediation process helps learners internalize linguistic structures and develop their speaking abilities (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006).

Vygotsky's theory supports active learning, where learners are actively involved in the learning process rather than passively receiving information. Peer collaboration encourages active participation, as students must articulate their thoughts, respond to peers, and engage in discussions. This active engagement is crucial for developing speaking proficiency and confidence (Brown & Lee, 2015).

In a collaborative learning environment, peers provide immediate feedback and support. This feedback helps learners recognize and correct errors, refine their language use, and improve their speaking skills. The supportive nature of peer collaboration creates a safe space for learners to practice and experiment with the language (Storch, 2013).

In conclusion, Vygotsky's Social Constructivism Theory provides a robust theoretical foundation for understanding the benefits of peer collaboration in language learning. By emphasizing the importance of social interaction, the ZPD, cultural tools, active learning, and immediate feedback, Vygotsky's theory highlights how peer collaboration can effectively enhance speaking skills. Through collaborative activities, learners can support each other's development, engage in meaningful communication, and build the confidence necessary for language proficiency.

### **1.5. Peer collaboration in language learning**

Peer collaboration is a powerful educational approach that leverages the social aspect of learning to enhance language acquisition. In the context of language learning, peer collaboration involves students working together in various interactive activities that promote communication, critical thinking, and mutual support. This method is particularly effective in developing speaking skills, as it provides learners with opportunities to practice the target language in authentic and meaningful contexts.

One of the primary benefits of peer collaboration is the creation of a supportive learning environment. According to Vygotsky's Social Constructivism Theory, social interaction is essential for cognitive development (Vygotsky, 1978). When students collaborate, they engage in dialogues that help them construct knowledge collectively. This supportive environment reduces anxiety and fosters a sense of community, which is especially important for first-year students who may feel apprehensive about speaking in a new language (Topping, 2005).

Peer collaboration also promotes active learning and immediate feedback. As students work together, they are actively involved in the learning process, which enhances their engagement and motivation (Johnson, Johnson, & Smith, 2013). Collaborative activities such as role-plays, group discussions, and peer feedback sessions allow learners to practice speaking in real-time, receive immediate feedback, and make necessary adjustments to their language use. This immediate feedback loop is crucial for developing both fluency and accuracy in speaking (Barkley, Cross, & Major, 2014).

Various peer collaboration activities have been shown to be effective in language learning. Peer tutoring, where more proficient students assist their peers, can significantly improve language skills (Storch, 2013). Group work and collaborative projects encourage students to communicate, negotiate meaning, and solve problems together, which are essential components of language acquisition (Gillies, 2016). Peer feedback sessions, where students review and provide feedback on each other's spoken output, help in identifying areas for improvement and building confidence (McCafferty, Jacobs, & Iddings, 2006).

Despite its benefits, peer collaboration in language learning also presents challenges. For instance, there might be unequal participation among group members, where more confident students dominate the conversation (Barkley et al., 2014). Instructors need to carefully design activities and monitor group dynamics to ensure balanced participation. Additionally, providing training on how to give effective feedback can maximize the benefits of peer collaboration (Topping, 2005).

In conclusion, peer collaboration is a valuable strategy for enhancing speaking skills in language learning. By creating a supportive and interactive learning environment, promoting active engagement and immediate feedback, and utilizing effective collaborative activities, educators can significantly improve their students' speaking proficiency. However, it is essential to address potential challenges to ensure that all students benefit equally from collaborative learning.

### **1.6. Definition and types of peer collaboration**

Peer collaboration is an educational strategy that involves students working together to achieve common academic goals. It leverages the social nature of learning by encouraging students to engage in dialogue, share ideas, and provide mutual support. This approach not only enhances academic achievement but also fosters important social and communication skills. In the context of language learning, peer collaboration is particularly effective in developing speaking abilities, as it provides opportunities for authentic interaction and immediate feedback (Johnson, Johnson, & Smith, 2013).

### **1.7. Types of peer collaboration**

#### *Peer Tutoring*

Peer tutoring involves students helping each other to learn material that they have already mastered. Typically, a more knowledgeable or skilled student (the tutor) provides assistance to a less experienced or struggling peer (the tutee). This method promotes individualized instruction and allows for personalized feedback. It also benefits the tutor, who reinforces their own

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knowledge by teaching it to others (Topping, 2005). For example, a student who excels in English may help a classmate who is struggling with pronunciation or grammar.

### *Peer Feedback*

Peer feedback involves students reviewing each other's work and providing constructive criticism and suggestions for improvement. This process encourages active engagement and critical thinking. Receiving feedback from peers can be less intimidating than from instructors, thus creating a supportive learning environment. It also fosters a sense of accountability and encourages students to critically evaluate their own work (McCafferty, Jacobs, & Iddings, 2006). After a speaking exercise, students might pair up to provide feedback on each other's pronunciation, fluency, and use of vocabulary.

### *Group Work*

Group work involves students working together in small groups to complete tasks, solve problems, or create projects. This collaborative approach emphasizes teamwork and collective problem-solving. Group work helps students develop communication and interpersonal skills. It also allows for the pooling of diverse perspectives and knowledge, which can enhance learning outcomes (Gillies, 2016). For instance, a group of students might work together to prepare a presentation on a given topic, with each member contributing different parts.

### *Collaborative Projects*

Collaborative projects involve students working together over an extended period to achieve a common goal, such as completing a research project or creating a presentation. These projects foster deep learning and critical thinking as students must plan, negotiate, and execute their tasks collectively. They also build long-term collaboration skills and a sense of shared responsibility (Barkley, Cross, & Major, 2014). For example, students may collaborate to research and present on various aspects of a cultural event, requiring them to synthesize their findings into a cohesive presentation.

### *Role-Plays and Simulations*

Role-plays and simulations involve students acting out scenarios that mimic real-life situations. This type of activity requires them to use language creatively and spontaneously. These activities enhance speaking skills by providing a safe space for practice and experimentation. They also help students develop empathy and a deeper understanding of different perspectives (Storch, 2013). For example, students might engage in a simulated job interview, practicing how to respond to common interview questions and interact with potential employers.

In summary, peer collaboration encompasses various strategies such as peer tutoring, peer feedback, group work, collaborative projects, and role-plays. Each type of peer collaboration offers unique benefits and opportunities for enhancing language learning and speaking skills through social interaction and mutual support.

## **1.8. Benefits and challenges of peer collaboration.**

### **1.8.1. Benefits of Peer Collaboration**

Peer collaboration offers numerous benefits that enhance the learning experience, particularly in language acquisition. One of the primary advantages is the creation of a supportive learning environment. Vygotsky's Social Constructivism Theory emphasizes that social interaction is crucial for cognitive development (Vygotsky, 1978). Through peer collaboration, students engage in meaningful dialogues that help them construct knowledge collectively. This environment reduces anxiety and fosters a sense of community, which is especially important for first-year students who may feel apprehensive about speaking in a new language (Topping, 2005). Another significant benefit is the promotion of active learning and immediate feedback. Collaborative activities such as role-plays, group discussions, and peer feedback sessions require students to be actively involved in the learning process, enhancing their engagement and motivation (Johnson, Johnson, & Smith, 2013). These activities provide opportunities for real-time practice and feedback, which are essential for developing fluency and accuracy in speaking (Barkley, Cross, & Major, 2014). Moreover, peer collaboration helps students develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills as they work together to solve problems and complete tasks.

Peer collaboration also encourages the development of social and communication skills. Working in groups or pairs allows students to practice effective communication, negotiation, and conflict resolution. These skills are not only valuable in language learning but also essential for personal and professional growth (Gillies, 2016). Additionally, peer collaboration fosters a sense of responsibility and accountability, as students rely on each other to achieve common goals (McCafferty, Jacobs, & Iddings, 2006).

### **1.8.2. Challenges of Peer Collaboration**

Despite its many benefits, peer collaboration also presents several challenges that need to be addressed to maximize its effectiveness. One of the main challenges is unequal participation among group members. In some cases, more confident or proficient students may dominate the conversation, while less confident students may remain passive (Barkley et al., 2014). This can lead to an imbalance in participation and learning opportunities. Instructors need to carefully design activities and monitor group dynamics to ensure that all students are actively engaged.

Another challenge is the potential for conflicts or disagreements among peers. Collaborative activities require students to work closely together, which can sometimes lead to misunderstandings or conflicts. It is important for instructors to provide clear

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guidelines and support to help students manage conflicts constructively (Gillies, 2016). Additionally, providing training on effective communication and collaboration skills can help students navigate these challenges more effectively.

The quality of peer feedback is another concern. While peer feedback can be valuable, it is not always accurate or constructive. Students may lack the expertise or confidence to provide effective feedback, which can limit the benefits of peer collaboration (Topping, 2005). Instructors should provide guidance on how to give and receive constructive feedback and may need to intervene to ensure the accuracy and usefulness of the feedback provided.

Lastly, logistical challenges such as coordinating schedules and managing group work can also pose difficulties. Collaborative projects and group activities require careful planning and coordination, which can be challenging in large classes or with diverse student schedules (Johnson et al., 2013). Instructors need to consider these logistical issues and provide appropriate support to facilitate effective collaboration.

In conclusion, while peer collaboration offers numerous benefits for language learning, it also presents several challenges that need to be addressed. By creating a supportive environment, promoting active participation, providing training on effective collaboration, and addressing logistical issues, educators can maximize the benefits of peer collaboration and enhance the learning experience for their students.

### **1.9. Traditional methods of teaching speaking.**

Traditional methods of teaching speaking have long been employed in language classrooms, focusing primarily on structured practice and the direct transmission of language knowledge from teacher to student. These methods often emphasize repetition, memorization, and controlled practice activities, which are designed to instill linguistic accuracy and foundational speaking skills.

#### **1.9.1. Grammar-Translation Method**

One of the oldest traditional methods is the grammar-translation method, which primarily focuses on reading and writing, with speaking taking a secondary role. In this method, students learn grammatical rules and apply them by translating sentences between the target language and their native language (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). While this method helps students understand the structure of the language, it provides limited opportunities for developing speaking skills, as it emphasizes written over oral communication.

#### **1.9.2. Audiolingual Method**

The audiolingual method, which gained popularity in the mid-20th century, focuses on repetitive drilling and practice of language patterns. This method is based on the behaviorist theory of learning, which posits that language learning is a result of habit formation (Brown & Lee, 2015). In the audiolingual method, students engage in repetitive drills and mimicry, practicing dialogues and sentence patterns to reinforce correct language use. While this method can improve pronunciation and help learners internalize language patterns, it often lacks opportunities for spontaneous and meaningful communication.

#### **1.9.3. Direct Method**

The direct method, also known as the natural method, emphasizes direct immersion in the target language without using the students' native language for instruction (Harmer, 2007). In this method, teachers use pictures, gestures, and realia to teach vocabulary and grammar inductively. Students are encouraged to speak from the very beginning, engaging in question-and-answer exercises and conversations. The direct method aims to develop oral communication skills by creating a language-rich environment. However, its effectiveness can be limited by the learners' initial lack of comprehension and the potential absence of systematic grammar instruction.

#### **1.9.4. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)**

Although not strictly a traditional method, communicative language teaching (CLT) has become a dominant approach over the past few decades, blending traditional and modern techniques. CLT focuses on the ability to communicate meaningfully and effectively in real-life situations (Richards, 2006). This method uses role-plays, discussions, and problem-solving tasks to promote interaction and communication. While CLT represents a shift towards more interactive and student-centered teaching, it often builds upon traditional methods by incorporating structured practice and explicit grammar instruction as necessary.

#### **1.9.5. Lecture-Based Instruction**

Lecture-based instruction is another traditional approach where the teacher delivers information verbally, and students take notes and listen passively. This method is often used to provide explicit grammar explanations and vocabulary lists (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). While it can be effective for delivering theoretical knowledge and ensuring that all students receive the same information, it typically does not engage students in active speaking practice.

#### **1.9.6. Challenges of Traditional Methods**

Despite their longstanding use, traditional methods of teaching speaking face several challenges. These methods often prioritize linguistic accuracy over fluency, leading to a lack of opportunities for authentic and spontaneous language use (Ur, 2012). Students may become proficient in controlled practice activities but struggle to apply their knowledge in real-world speaking situations. Furthermore, traditional methods can be teacher-centered, limiting student interaction and active participation (Harmer, 2007). This can result in a lack of motivation and engagement, particularly among learners who benefit from more interactive and communicative approaches.

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In conclusion, traditional methods of teaching speaking, such as the grammar-translation method, audiolingual method, direct method, and lecture-based instruction, have contributed to foundational language learning. However, they often fall short in promoting authentic communication and active student engagement. Modern approaches like communicative language teaching attempt to address these limitations by incorporating more interactive and student-centered techniques, thus providing a more balanced approach to language teaching.

### **1.10. Comparative analysis of peer collaboration versus traditional methods.**

#### **1.10.1.Engagement and Interaction**

One of the primary differences between peer collaboration and traditional methods of teaching speaking lies in the level of student engagement and interaction. Traditional methods, such as the grammar-translation and audiolingual methods, often involve teacher-centered instruction where students passively receive information (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). These methods emphasize repetition, memorization, and the application of grammatical rules through structured exercises, which can limit opportunities for spontaneous and meaningful communication (Ur, 2012).

In contrast, peer collaboration fosters a more interactive and engaging learning environment. By working in pairs or groups, students actively participate in dialogues, discussions, and problem-solving tasks. This active engagement promotes deeper learning and retention, as students are required to articulate their thoughts, negotiate meaning, and provide feedback to their peers (Johnson, Johnson, & Smith, 2013). The collaborative nature of peer activities encourages students to take an active role in their learning, enhancing their motivation and confidence in using the target language (Barkley, Cross, & Major, 2014).

#### **1.10.2.Real-Life Communication**

Traditional methods often focus on linguistic accuracy, emphasizing the correct use of grammar and vocabulary through controlled practice. While this approach can help students develop a solid foundation in the language, it may not adequately prepare them for real-life communication. The structured and repetitive nature of traditional methods can result in learners who are proficient in classroom exercises but struggle to use the language fluently and spontaneously in everyday situations (Brown & Lee, 2015).

Peer collaboration, on the other hand, emphasizes communicative competence and the ability to use the language effectively in real-life contexts. Activities such as role-plays, simulations, and group discussions mimic authentic communication scenarios, providing students with the opportunity to practice speaking in a supportive and realistic environment (Storch, 2013). This focus on real-life communication helps learners develop both fluency and accuracy, making them better equipped to handle spontaneous interactions outside the classroom (Richards, 2006).

#### **1.10.3.Feedback and Error Correction**

In traditional language teaching, feedback and error correction are typically provided by the teacher, often in a formal and structured manner. While this can ensure accurate and consistent feedback, it may also create a learning environment where students are hesitant to take risks and make mistakes, fearing negative evaluation (Harmer, 2007).

Peer collaboration introduces a different dynamic to feedback and error correction. In collaborative settings, students receive immediate feedback from their peers, which can be less intimidating and more supportive (Topping, 2005). Peer feedback encourages a more egalitarian learning environment where students feel comfortable experimenting with the language and learning from their mistakes. This immediate and informal feedback can be highly effective in helping students identify and correct errors in real-time, promoting continuous improvement (Gillies, 2016).

#### **1.10.4.Development of Social and Communication Skills**

Traditional methods of teaching speaking often prioritize linguistic skills over social and communication skills. While students may become proficient in grammar and vocabulary, they may lack the ability to effectively interact and communicate with others in social settings (Ur, 2012). The teacher-centered nature of traditional methods can also limit opportunities for students to develop collaboration and teamwork skills.

Peer collaboration addresses this gap by integrating social and communication skills into the language learning process. Collaborative activities require students to work together, communicate effectively, and negotiate meaning. These interactions help students develop important social skills such as active listening, empathy, and conflict resolution (McCafferty, Jacobs, & Iddings, 2006). By fostering these skills, peer collaboration not only enhances language proficiency but also prepares students for successful communication in diverse social and professional contexts.

#### **1.10.5.Flexibility and Adaptability**

Traditional methods are often characterized by a fixed curriculum and structured lesson plans, which can limit flexibility and adaptability in addressing individual student needs. These methods may not always account for the diverse learning styles and preferences of students, leading to a one-size-fits-all approach (Harmer, 2007).

Peer collaboration, however, offers greater flexibility and adaptability. Collaborative activities can be easily tailored to suit the varying proficiency levels and interests of students. This adaptability allows for a more personalized learning experience, where students can work at their own pace and focus on areas that need improvement (Johnson et al., 2013). The collaborative approach also enables teachers to incorporate diverse and dynamic activities, making language learning more engaging and effective.



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In conclusion, while traditional methods of teaching speaking provide a structured foundation for language learning, peer collaboration offers significant advantages in terms of engagement, real-life communication, feedback, social skill development, and flexibility. By integrating collaborative activities into language instruction, educators can create a more interactive, supportive, and effective learning environment that better prepares students for real-world communication.

### **III. METHODOLOGY**

#### **1.11. Research design**

This study employs a quasi-experimental research design to investigate the extent to which peer collaboration improves the speaking proficiency of first-year students. The quasi-experimental design is chosen due to its practicality in educational settings, allowing the researcher to compare the outcomes of an intervention with a control group without random assignment. This approach enables the examination of causal relationships while maintaining the natural classroom environment.

#### **1.12. Participants**

The study involves two groups of 124 first-year students enrolled in an English language learning course at Dai Nam University. The experimental group consists of 76 students who participated in peer collaboration activities, and the control group, consist of 48 students who followed the traditional method of language instruction. Both groups are similar in terms of their demographic characteristics, language proficiency levels, and educational backgrounds to ensure comparability.

#### **1.13. Intervention**

The experimental group will engage in structured peer collaboration activities designed to enhance speaking skills. These activities include peer tutoring, group discussions, role-plays, and peer feedback sessions. The intervention will be implemented over a 11-week period, with regular sessions integrated into the existing curriculum. Each session will focus on specific aspects of speaking proficiency, such as fluency, accuracy, pronunciation, and communicative competence.

#### **1.14. Data collection**

Quantitative data will be collected through pre- and post-tests, surveys, and tracking the frequency and duration of speaking activities. The pre- and post-tests will involve standardized speaking proficiency tests administered to both the experimental and control groups. These tests will assess various dimensions of speaking skills, including fluency, accuracy, and overall communicative competence. Surveys will be distributed to gather students' self-assessments of their speaking proficiency and confidence levels before and after the intervention. Additionally, the frequency and duration of speaking activities during peer collaboration sessions will be recorded to quantify the amount of speaking practice.

#### **1.15. Data analysis**

The collected data will be analyzed using statistical methods to determine the impact of peer collaboration on speaking proficiency. Descriptive statistics will summarize the pre- and post-test scores and survey responses. Paired sample t-tests will be used to compare the pre- and post-test results within each group, while independent sample t-tests will compare the outcomes between the experimental and control groups. The analysis will focus on identifying statistically significant improvements in the speaking proficiency of the experimental group compared to the control group. Survey data will be analyzed to detect trends and measure changes in students' self-perceived speaking proficiency and confidence levels.

### **IV. RESEARCH FINDINGS**

#### **1.16. Quantitative Findings**

The paired samples t-test was conducted to specify the differences between pre-test and post-test. This test is appropriate because it compares the means of two related groups (the same participants' scores before and after the intervention) to determine if there is a statistically significant difference. The results (Table 1) indicate a significant improvement in students' speaking proficiency following the peer collaboration intervention. The mean difference between the pre-test and post-test scores is -1.456, suggesting that, on average, the post-test scores are 1.456 units higher than the pre-test scores. This negative mean difference highlights the positive impact of the intervention on the students' speaking abilities.

The standard deviation of the differences is 1.433, and the standard error of the mean difference is 0.129. These values indicate the variability and precision of the mean difference estimate. The 95% confidence interval for the mean difference ranges from -1.710 to -1.201. Since this interval does not include zero, we can be 95% confident that the true mean difference in the population is within this range, further supporting the statistical significance of the observed improvement.

The t-statistic of -11.313, with 123 degrees of freedom, underscores the substantial difference between the pre-test and post-test scores relative to the variation in the differences. The p-value of 0.000 is well below the common alpha level of 0.05, confirming that the difference is statistically significant and not due to random chance.

In conclusion, the results of the paired samples t-test provide strong evidence that the peer collaboration intervention effectively enhanced the students' speaking proficiency. The significant increase in post-test scores compared to pre-test scores suggests that the intervention was successful in achieving its goal of improving speaking skills among first-year students.

**Table 1: Paired Samples Test**

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Dev	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
				Mean	Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Pre-test –Post-test	-1.46	1.43	.129	-1.71	-1.201	-11.3	123	.000

**1.17. Qualitative Findings**

The qualitative phase of this study aimed to explore the specific peer collaboration activities that were most effective in improving the speaking skills of first-year students. Data were collected through classroom observations, student surveys, semi-structured interviews, and focus group discussions. The analysis focused on identifying common themes and patterns in students' experiences and perceptions of the peer collaboration intervention.

A significant theme that emerged from the data was the increased confidence and reduced anxiety among students when speaking English. Many students reported that participating in peer collaboration activities significantly increased their confidence. The supportive environment created by working with peers helped reduce speaking anxiety, which was a common barrier to effective communication. One student mentioned, "I used to be very nervous when speaking in front of the class, but practicing with my classmates made me feel more comfortable and confident."

Role-playing activities were highlighted as particularly beneficial for improving speaking skills. Students appreciated the realistic scenarios and the opportunity to practice practical language use. They felt that role-playing allowed them to apply their language skills in simulated real-life situations, which was both engaging and educational. A student commented, "Role-playing was fun and made me feel like I was using English in real situations, which helped me learn better."

Another key theme was the effectiveness of peer feedback mechanisms. Students valued the constructive feedback from their peers, which helped them identify specific areas for improvement. The process of providing feedback also made students more critical and reflective of their own speaking skills. As one student noted, "Receiving feedback from my friends was really helpful because they pointed out things I didn't notice about my speaking. It also made me pay more attention to how I speak."

Collaborative projects and group discussions were reported to be effective in fostering a deeper understanding of the language and promoting active participation. These activities encouraged students to articulate their thoughts clearly and engage in meaningful conversations. The collaborative nature of these tasks also promoted a sense of teamwork and mutual support. One participant stated, "Working on projects with my classmates was great. We had to talk a lot to plan and present our work, which made us practice speaking a lot."

Beyond language improvement, students experienced cultural and social benefits from peer collaboration. Interacting with peers from diverse backgrounds enriched their cultural understanding and enhanced their ability to communicate across cultural boundaries. This aspect was particularly appreciated by students, as it broadened their perspectives and made learning more enjoyable. A student remarked, "I learned a lot about my classmates' cultures through our discussions. It made learning English more interesting and fun."

The overall perception of the peer collaboration intervention was overwhelmingly positive. Students expressed a strong preference for this interactive and engaging approach over traditional lecture-based instruction. They believed that peer collaboration not only improved their speaking proficiency but also made learning more enjoyable and motivating. As summarized by one participant, "I really liked the peer collaboration activities. They were much more interesting than regular classes and helped me improve my speaking a lot."

In conclusion, the qualitative findings underscore the effectiveness of peer collaboration activities in enhancing the speaking skills of first-year students. The increased confidence, practical language use through role-playing, constructive peer feedback, collaborative projects, and cultural enrichment all contributed to the positive outcomes of the intervention. These insights provide valuable guidance for designing future language instruction programs that leverage peer collaboration to improve speaking proficiency.

**V.DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

**1.18. Discussion**

The findings from this study provide strong evidence supporting the effectiveness of peer collaboration in improving the speaking proficiency of first-year university students. The quantitative phase of the research demonstrated a significant increase in post-test scores compared to pre-test scores, indicating that the intervention had a measurable impact on students' speaking abilities. The qualitative phase offered deeper insights into the specific elements of peer collaboration that contributed to these improvements.

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One of the key findings was the increase in students' confidence and reduction in anxiety when speaking English. The supportive and non-judgmental environment created through peer collaboration activities played a crucial role in this. Students felt more comfortable practicing their speaking skills with peers, which helped them overcome the fear of making mistakes. This aligns with previous research suggesting that reducing language anxiety is essential for effective language acquisition (Horwitz, 2010).

Role-playing activities emerged as particularly beneficial. By engaging in realistic and practical scenarios, students were able to apply their language skills in meaningful contexts. This hands-on approach not only made learning more engaging but also reinforced the practical use of language, thereby enhancing students' speaking proficiency. These findings are consistent with the experiential learning theory, which emphasizes learning through experience (Kolb, 1984).

Peer feedback was another critical component of the intervention. Constructive feedback from peers helped students identify specific areas for improvement and encouraged self-reflection. The process of giving and receiving feedback made students more aware of their speaking habits and motivated them to make positive changes. This finding supports the notion that peer assessment can be an effective tool for language learning (Topping, 1998).

Collaborative projects and group discussions also played a significant role in improving speaking skills. These activities required students to articulate their thoughts clearly and engage in meaningful conversations, promoting active participation and deeper understanding of the language. Moreover, the collaborative nature of these tasks fostered a sense of teamwork and mutual support, which further enhanced the learning experience. These results are in line with Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivist theory, which highlights the importance of social interaction in cognitive development.

Beyond language improvement, the study found that peer collaboration activities provided cultural and social benefits. Interacting with peers from diverse backgrounds enriched students' cultural understanding and enhanced their ability to communicate across cultural boundaries. This cultural exchange made learning more enjoyable and broadened students' perspectives, highlighting the holistic benefits of peer collaboration.

### IV. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study provides compelling evidence that peer collaboration is an effective strategy for improving the speaking proficiency of first-year university students. The quantitative data revealed significant improvements in speaking skills, while the qualitative data provided valuable insights into the specific activities that contributed to these gains. Increased confidence, practical language use through role-playing, constructive peer feedback, collaborative projects, and cultural enrichment were all identified as key factors in the success of the intervention.

The findings suggest that incorporating peer collaboration into language instruction can lead to substantial improvements in speaking proficiency and overall learning experience. Educators should consider integrating structured peer collaboration activities into their curricula to enhance language learning outcomes. Future research could explore the long-term effects of peer collaboration and investigate its impact on other language skills such as listening, reading, and writing.

Overall, this study underscores the potential of peer collaboration to transform language education by making it more interactive, engaging, and effective. By leveraging the power of peer interactions, educators can create a supportive learning environment that fosters both linguistic and personal growth among students.

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